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General Assembly
Seventy-second session

Official Records

98th plenary meeting
Friday, 22 June 2018, 11 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Brown (Liberia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

Agenda item 35 (*continued*)

Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development

Draft resolution (A/72/L.58)

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Tudor Ulianovschi, Minister for Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova, to introduce draft resolution A/72/L.58.

Mr. Ulianovschi (Moldova): Draft resolution A/72/L.58, which I have the honour to introduce today under agenda item 35. focuses on a pressing legal and political issue against the background of a protracted conflict that was generated externally in the eastern part of the Republic of Moldova. It addresses a matter of fundamental concern to my country.

Almost 27 years after Moldova regained its independence and 26 years after it became a State Member of the United Nations, the Operational Group of Russian Forces and its armaments are still stationed on the territory of the Republic of Moldova without its consent. The continued presence of foreign military forces and armaments on the territory of the Republic of Moldova against its express wish is not only incompatible with its independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and permanent neutrality, but also entirely incompatible with the rules of international law and the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

The presence of any foreign troops on the internationally recognized territory of any State Member of the United Nations without its consent and against its express wish constitutes a grave breach of the Charter of the United Nations and of the rules and principles that govern international relations. The Charter of the United Nations and international law are very clear on that account and leave no room for interpretations based on the circumstantial interests of any given Member State. That is the main message also conveyed by all resolutions adopted in the past by the Security Council and the General Assembly on unlawful military presence on the territories of States Members of the United Nations.

The continued presence of the Operational Group of Russian Forces and its huge stockpiles of armaments on the territory of the Republic of Moldova should not be an exception to the aforementioned international rules and principles.

Accordingly, the proposed draft resolution reaffirms the need for all States to adhere strictly to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and recognizes that the continued stationing of Russian military forces and armaments on the territory of the Republic of Moldova without its consent violates its sovereignty and territorial integrity, and that that is a problem that must be resolved in good faith, unconditionally, without further delay and in a peaceful manner.

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The obfuscated and circumstantial claim that the presence of the Operational Group of Russian Forces is somehow legal according to the 1992 Moldovan-Russian ceasefire agreement is merely a distortion of the content of the document. The 1992 ceasefire agreement was not intended to and did not grant basic rights to Russian military forces in the Republic of Moldova. It merely provided for specific conditions and tools to stop the violent clashes that occurred as a result of concerted unlawful action aimed at denying the authorities of the newly independent State their right to exercise constitutional control of the eastern part of the country. One of those tools was the creation of a Joint Control Commission empowered with military contingents — improperly labelled later as peacekeeping — provided by the parties to the conflict, including the Russian Federation.

The recurring discreditable narrative of the role of the Operational Group of Russian Forces as a guarantor of peace and stability in the Republic of Moldova subtly implies that the Group might have a certain peacekeeping role that makes it undistinguishable from the rotating Russian contingent, which participates in the military component of the Joint Control Commission. However, the truth is that the Operational Group of Russian Forces has nothing to do with the Commission's military component. There are no legal grounds for the Operational Group to be considered part of that component or for the Group's continued presence in the Republic of Moldova.

For the sake of clarity, the draft resolution clearly distinguishes between the Russian rotating contingent operating under the military component of the Joint Control Commission and the Operational Group of Russian Forces, and further stresses that the Operational Group has not been entrusted with any peacekeeping or other legal mandate. In that context, let me underscore that the Commission's military component long ago fulfilled its scope. That obsolete mechanism has turned into a factor of conflict preservation and failed to ensure the full demilitarization of the security zone. That is why the Republic of Moldova has repeatedly called for, within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), its transformation into a neutral multinational civilian mission with an international mandate.

The situation I have just presented cannot be downplayed and casually defined as an outstanding matter that arises from the implementation or non-implementation of the signed but not ratified 1992 Moldovan-Russian ceasefire agreement. The protracted situation is now almost 27 years old and cannot be euphemistically characterized as a purely bilateral issue between the two States Members of the United Nations. The need for an early, orderly and complete withdrawal of Russian troops and armaments from the territory of the Republic of Moldova has been emphasized in many consensus-based OSCE ministerial declarations and related resolutions — documents that the Russian Federation also endorsed or co-sponsored. As a signatory to the 1999 OSCE summit outcome document, the Russian Federation legally committed to a complete withdrawal of its troops and armaments by the end of 2002. Despite concerns about the speed and transparency of the withdrawal process, the uneven progress achieved by the Russian Federation between 2001 and 2002 was noted and its commitment to completing the orderly withdrawal of its troops and armaments by 31 December 2003 was included in the Porto OSCE Ministerial Declaration.

Responding in good faith to the Russian Federation's technical requirements pertaining to the orderly withdrawal within the new deadline set by the wording, provided the necessary conditions are in place, the participating States of the OSCE agreed to continue to support the withdrawal of Russian troops and the disposal of ammunition by appropriate measures, including through additional contributions to a voluntary fund established for that purpose. Early in 2004, the process of withdrawal was ceased on grounds that are both legally and politically untenable. The rigid condition laid down by the Russian Federation that the Operational Group's withdrawal shall be synchronized with and finalized only after the settlement of the protracted political conflict in the eastern part of the country is both illegitimate and unacceptable. The withdrawal of foreign troops and the conflict-resolution process are totally different issues and cannot be linked. One should not be a condition for the other.

The Transnistrian issue is a matter that falls within the domestic jurisdiction of the Republic of Moldova. The international conflict-settlement mechanism in place is mandated to facilitate in conditions of neutrality and non-interference in internal affairs a political solution based on full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova. OSCE ministerial declarations adopted by consensus explicitly stress that progress on the withdrawal of Russian troops

and armaments cannot be linked to any other question with due regard to existing agreements.

References to the 2002 Porto OSCE Ministerial Declaration, which contains technical wording related to the orderly aspect of the next stage of the withdrawal process, are out of context. As was agreed by all parties involved in the negotiation of that statement, the wording "necessary conditions", used in the context of orderly withdrawal, refers solely to technical arrangements and shall in no way be applied to any political circumstances. Neither the 2002 Porto OSCE Ministerial Declaration nor other agreed documents stipulate that the Operational Group of Russian Forces is mandated to indefinitely guard in the eastern part of the country its arsenal of armaments of approximately 21,000 metric tons of munition or to provide assistance and security guarantees to the unconstitutional power structures created after the signing of the 1992 ceasefire agreement.

Let me recall that the Moldovan Constitution expressly prohibits the stationing of foreign troops on its national territory. In view of that absolute prohibition, no exceptions whatsoever are allowed. The continued rigid conditionality laid down by the Russian Federation that the withdrawal of the Operational Group shall be synchronized with the settlement of an internal political issue clearly contradicts internationally accepted principles, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the 1970 Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States and indeed in all other documents adopted by the United Nations, with a view to upholding sovereign equality.

The proposed draft resolution cannot be portrayed as an unfriendly action towards another State Member of the United Nations or as an attempt to move discussion elsewhere. Rather, it seeks to consolidate the support of the United Nations for a Member State whose sovereignty and territorial integrity are undermined by the continued illegal military presence of another Member State. The increase in scope and frequency of the illegal joint military exercises of the Operational Group of Russian Forces with the paramilitaries of the unconstitutional power structures in the eastern part of the country is nothing more than a continuous violation of the 1992 ceasefire agreement that contains an explicit legally binding commitment to ensuring the neutrality of Russian Forces.

Aiming to upgrade the military offensive capacity of unconstitutional power structures, the illegal joint military exercises undermine international efforts to achieve the peaceful resolution of the protracted Transnistrian problem. The Republic of Moldova, echoed by other OSCE member States, repeatedly expressed its deep concern with regard to these unlawful and destabilizing activities that run contrary to the obligations of the Russian Federation, in the framework of the 5+2 international settlement format.

We cannot but disagree with the characterization given by the detractor of this draft resolution, that the Moldovan initiative is confrontational by its nature and represents a potential source of open tension in south-eastern Europe. On the contrary, the Operational Group's continued illegal presence and its unauthorized and provocative military activities on foreign soil befit that description and can also be identified as unlawful under the terms of Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter of the United Nations.

Through its 21 July 2017 declaration, distributed subsequently to the United Nations membership as an official document of the General Assembly and the Security Council, the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova reaffirmed and re-emphasized the long-held official Moldovan position that the unauthorized continued stationing of foreign troops in the eastern part of the country constitute

> "violations of the constitutional provisions, as well as of international law" (*A/71/997, annex, p. 2*).

The Parliament has also reiterated its calls for the resumption and conclusion of the withdrawal process of Russian forces, particularly of the huge quantities of arms and munitions currently held in the territory of the Republic of Moldova. Although they are located on our territory, those weapons and munitions are not under our jurisdiction or control. Due to the complete lack of transparency on and access to these foreign weapons and munitions, both the Moldovan Government and the OSCE are effectively prevented from assessing those munitions, some of which may pose substantial environmental danger, or from monitoring weapons and munitions transfers within its territory or abroad.

For the same reasons, the Republic of Moldova is unable to fulfil its international obligations as a State party to various United Nations and international disarmament conventions, particularly those that ban certain categories of weapons. This situation is of an

international character and shall not be allowed to persist. The Government of the Republic of Moldova, through its Prime Minister, Mr. Pavel Filip, has repeatedly apprised the General Assembly and the high contracting parties to respective conventions of its concerns in that regard.

It is also against that backdrop that the proposed draft resolution

> "[u]rges the Russian Federation to complete, unconditionally and without further delay, the orderly withdrawal of the Operational Group of Russian Forces and its armaments from the territory of the Republic of Moldova" (*A/72/L.58, para. 2*)

and further encourages the OSCE participating States to facilitate the completion of the process of withdrawal, in accordance with the relevant OSCE Ministerial Council decisions and as agreed at the 1999 OSCE summit in Istanbul.

In its last paragraph, the draft resolution requests the inclusion, in the provisional agenda of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly, an item entitled "Complete withdrawal of foreign military forces from the territory of the Republic of Moldova". The respective request fully complies with Article 11, paragraph 2, of the Charter of the United Nations. An item on this issue and its subsequent constructive consideration by the General Assembly would constitute a highly needed application of preventive diplomacy vis-à-vis a Member State, whose sovereign rights under the Charter, territorial integrity and sovereignty are continuously challenged.

In that connection, let me remind the Assembly that the Republic of Moldova requested the inclusion of a supplementary item, with an identical title, in the agenda of the current, seventy-second session of the General Assembly. Despite our strenuous, two-month-long efforts to create grounds for a consensual recommendation by the General Committee and despite the lack of procedural objections by Committee members, it was not yet possible to move forward with a procedural action that fully complied with rules 41 and 42 of the rules of procedure.

We firmly believe that any amendment seeking to change the title and substance of the proposed items or resolutions in a way that completely reverses their scope or, by their political implications, might undermine or violate the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States Members of the United Nations should not be eligible for procedural action or consideration either in the General Committee or in the General Assembly.

We do not seek confrontation or politicization when we bring the issue of the long-awaited withdrawal of foreign troops from the territory of the Republic of Moldova before the General Assembly. It is a matter of high principle and of high political importance for every Member State to fully exercise its legitimate rights and authority on its own territory.

We hope that this initiative will enjoy the same support and constructive attitude, on behalf of the member States, as the similar resolutions 47/21 and 48/18, adopted in 1992 and 1993, which contributed to the withdrawal of foreign military forces from the territories of Baltic States.

The overarching purpose of draft resolution A/72/L.58, before the Assembly today, is to uphold the fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter. Therefore, a vote in favour of this draft would not be a vote against any Member State, but, rather, a vote to uphold the Charter and international law. Likewise, a vote against any motion that seeks to deny the consideration of the proposed draft resolution would be a vote to uphold the sovereign rights of Member States to bring before the General Assembly legitimate concerns that fall within the Assembly's competence.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Moldova, let me express deep gratitude to the sponsors of draft resolution A/72/L.58: Canada, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, the United Kingdom and Ukraine. Likewise, I wish to thank in advance all member States that will vote today in the spirit of international law and the United Nations Charter.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation on a point of order.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Our delegation would like to propose an adjournment of the debate, also known as a no-action motion, as set forth in rule 74 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. I would like to explain the reasons for this initiative.

We are not shying away from discussing pressing issues of the Transnistrian solution. Rather, we actively support the relevant existing international formats, first

among which is the negotiation process under the 5+2 formula launched in 2005. Our country is committed to the process of a political solution to the Transnistrian issue and is one of the main mediators and guarantors of the resolution process. There is no alternative to that format. The contacts among the parties within its framework enable gradual progress to be made towards an outcome that would be acceptable to all. It is vital to maintain a trusted dialogue, mutual respect and a constructive atmosphere, and it seemed to us that there have recently been more reasons for optimism. We were therefore extremely disappointed and surprised that the Moldovan delegation had hastily cobbled together a draft resolution (A/72/L.58) for the General Assembly without any preliminary consultations on the text. Such odd ways of working on documents are not conducive to reaching consensus and undermine the Assembly's principles of openness and transparency in its activities. We therefore believe that considering the draft resolution proposed by Moldova today would be entirely untimely and counterproductive.

There is also one more argument for the importance of postponing the consideration of Moldova's text. We just heard an extremely emotional statement from the Moldovan Minister for Fo[illegible]gn Affairs in favour of the draft resolution. I will refrain from commenting on its content, which is typical of a certain segment of the Moldovan elite in its selective use and skewed interpretation of the facts. That is nothing new here. I will just point out that he forgot to mention one very important point in his long statement, which is that in his homeland there is no consensus on the draft resolution being introduced today. Our colleague was obviously reluctant to share with us the fact that on 19 June, President Igor Dodon of Moldova made a special address in which he sharply criticized the Government's initiative in bringing this draft resolution to the Assembly. I will not quote his harsh words, since this is clearly an internal issue for Moldova. One thing is clear, which is that the country is divided on the issue, and today we are the unwilling participants in a public-relations exercise that is being produced primarily for domestic political reasons. It would seem to us that participation in such machinations does nothing for the General Assembly's authority.

Frankly, today's draft resolution has every chance of playing an extremely negative role in the negotiation process that I touched on just now. Peace, albeit a fragile one, is currently being maintained the region. Many of those here may have already forgotten the miseries of the Transnistrian conflict during the 1990s. But it was Russian military action that ended the bloodshed there in 1992. According to various estimates, around 1,000 people died and 4,500 were injured on both sides at the time, with colossal damage to infrastructure and social facilities in the city of Bender. We would like to emphasize that thanks to the Russian military, this region is the only one in Eastern Europe where there was no relapse into fighting.

We are committed to the Russian military contingent's fulfilment of the mandate and tasks of the Joint Control Commission on the Dniester. As is well known, it has been present in the Transnistrian region of Moldova in order to protect munitions depots that have been there since Soviet times. Both of those components exist as a result of the unresolved nature of the conflict, and they cannot be addressed separately.

Fortunately, there have been no emergency events recently that might have been grounds for considering this topic in the forum of the United Nations. It should be discussed within the framework of the existing bilateral and international formats for a Transnistrian settlement. Attempts to politicize it could seriously damage and significantly complicate the reconciliation process between the Moldovan and Transnistrian sides and, as a result, would only make a settlement of the protracted conflict in Moldova less likely. We are ready for productive work based on the principles of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Moldova. We expect the same from the Moldovan side, on whose political will the success or failure of this platform largely depends. We call on Chisinau to refrain from taking steps that might undermine its effectiveness and from making confrontational moves. Unfortunately, the draft resolution will do exactly that.

I would like all the delegations in this Hall to understand their responsibility. We do not want any future efforts to address the Transnistrian issue to be focused on overcoming the negative consequences of the draft resolution before the Assembly. We realize that the Moldovan initiative has caught many here unawares. Can we really work on such a serious and consequential text in such haste, without due discussion or any certainty that it enjoys the necessary support in the country that has submitted it? For us, the answer is clear. This is not a situation where the General Assembly should take a decision.

That is why the best option today would be to postpone the discussion until the Assembly's next session, with the understanding that the draft resolution's authors will invite all stakeholders to work on its text. The work of achieving the consensus that is so essential in such cases will also help to ensure that it is accepted in Moldova itself. I would like to believe that such an approach will eventually prevail. I want to once again make it clear that whoever votes in favour of our proposal is not killing the Moldovan draft resolution, merely giving us an opportunity to work on it the way we should. Nor are we in any way infringing on any State's right to ask questions that concern it in the General Assembly.

The Acting President: The representative of the Russian Federation has moved, within the terms of rule 74 of the Assembly's rules of procedure, that no action be taken on draft resolution A/72/L.58. Rule 74 reads as follows:

> "During the discussion of any matter, a representative may move the adjournment of the debate on the item under discussion. In addition to the proposer of the motion, two representatives may speak in favour of, and two against, the motion, after which the motion shall be immediately put to the vote."

I shall now call on delegations wishing to make statements with respect to the motion before the Assembly.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): The motion that has just been introduced seeks to prevent the General Assembly from fulfilling its mandate under the Charter of the United Nations. We believe that any motion precluding discussion on issues related to respect for the Charter and the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States is unjustified and undermines the authority and credibility of the Assembly, and draft resolution A/72/L.58, introduced today by the Foreign Minister of Moldova, is precisely about such issues and about respect for the Charter.

The refusal of the Russian Federation to honour its international commitments and withdraw its troops and arms from the territory of the Republic of Moldova is a clear violation of Moldovan national legislation and international law. I would like to reiterate Ukraine's support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova, within its internationally recognized borders. My delegation will vote against Russia's proposal, and we call on other delegations to do the same.

Mr. Ye Minn Thein (Myanmar): Myanmar believes that engagement and the necessary consultations are important. Myanmar therefore supports Russia's proposal to adopt a no-action motion on draft resolution A/72/L.58 and adjourn consideration of this item until the next session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Moraru (Republic of Moldova): I am taking the floor to object strongly to the proposal by the delegation of the Russian Federation to adjourn the debate under rule 74 of the Assembly's rules of procedure. This attempt to prevent draft resolution A/72/L.58 from being considered on procedural grounds runs counter to the best practices of the General Assembly. The call for an adjournment aims to deny the States Members of the United Nations the sovereign right to bring before the General Assembly any concern that they believe merits its attention and also limits the agenda of the Assembly. It contradicts one of the ideas on which the creation of the United Nations was founded, which is that the legitimate concerns of Member States should be addressed and discussed openly. Every proposal presented in the General Assembly deserves consideration based on its own merits. On behalf of the sponsors of draft resolution A/72/L.58, I strongly urge member States to vote against the proposed adjournment of the debate.

Mr. Tozik (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The Republic of Belarus supports the proposal to take a procedural decision not to consider draft resolution A/72/L.58, which has been presented to the Assembly today under agenda item 35. Without touching on the substance of the item, we want to draw the Assembly's attention to some procedural issues that in our view present obstacles to a decision on the draft resolution. The text was submitted to the Secretariat without allowing due time to discuss it. Nor were there any formal consultations with representatives of States on the text of the draft resolution itself.

We would not like to see such an approach, which obstructs the principle of transparency with regard to the rules concerning the consideration of decisions in the General Assembly, become part of normal practice in the Assembly's work. We do not believe that we should permit a precedent to be created when a decision is being made without the due involvement of all stakeholders with a take-it-or-leave-it attitude. Considering the lack

of any negotiation process for the draft resolution and the potential procedural issues, we support the proposal to postpone its consideration today.

The Acting President: I shall now put to the vote the motion submitted by the representative of the Russian Federation that no action be taken on draft resolution A/72/L.58.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Algeria, Angola, Armenia, Belarus, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Burundi, China, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Guinea, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Myanmar, Namibia, Nicaragua, Russian Federation, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

Against:

Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Belgium, Belize, Botswana, Bulgaria, Cabo Verde, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Ecuador, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Maldives, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Zimbabwe

Abstaining:

Antigua and Barbuda, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Benin, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Fiji, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Kiribati, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Liberia, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritius, Nepal, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Rwanda, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Thailand, Tunisia, Tuvalu, United Arab Emirates

The motion was rejected by 80 votes to 24, with 48 abstentions.

The Acting President: As the motion for no action has not been adopted, the Assembly will now proceed to take a decision on draft resolution A/72/L.58.

Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote before the voting, I would like to remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We regret that our proposal was not supported. However, in considering the substance of draft resolution A/72/L.58 and in making a decision, it is vital that we have a clear understanding of the issue today. In accordance with paragraphs 2 and 3 of Article 18 of the Charter of the United Nations and rules 83 and 85 of the Assembly's rules of procedure, decisions can be taken on important questions or any other category of question. They differ on the majority — a two-thirds majority or a simple majority — needed for taking such decisions. I would appreciate a clarification on that.

Mr. Al Arsan (Syrian Arab Republic): My delegation will vote against draft resolution A/72/L.58. In explanation of our position, based on the historical and geopolitical realities of this issue, we believe that the best way forward is to continue handling it within the framework of the bilateral relations between the Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation, as well as within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). In that regard, my delegation further affirms the following facts.

First, matters relating to the draft resolution continue to fall under the mandate of the 1992 Agreement on the Principles for a Peaceful Settlement of the Armed Conflict in the Dniester Region of the Republic of Moldova. The Agreement is still in force and has been supplemented by an additional protocol on the modalities of the presence of peacekeepers.

Secondly, any dispute arising from the application of the Agreement and the additional protocol should be resolved in good faith and through consultations

and direct contact between the Governments of the relevant States.

Thirdly, the internationally recognized 5+2 format, in place since 2005, is the best way to resolve conflicts in the Transnistria region. However, its effectiveness is still dependent on the genuine political will of the concerned parties and should not be mixed up with attempts to involve the United Nations in the issue for political reasons. Such practices will not serve to better the relations between the two countries and will impede efforts to maintain security and stability in the region. In that context, we would like to point out that relations between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Moldova have been on the right track since the signing of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between the two countries in 2001.

For those reasons, my delegation believes that the draft resolution would not serve to improve the relations between the two countries and would jeopardize the OSCE framework, especially considering its imbalanced language and purely political approach. We will therefore vote against the draft resolution, and we call on other States to do the same.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We were talking about issues of procedure, not substance. We regret that in the clear absence of consensus in this Hall a disposition towards destroying the unity of the Assembly has prevailed. We want to once again affirm that Russia is firmly committed to the Russian military contingent's fulfilment of the mandate and tasks of the Joint Control Commission on the Dniester, for which, regrettably, no real basis for a change in format is being contemplated.

Let me repeat once again that we are fully committed to the process of finding a political settlement for the Transnistrian issue. However, the steps being taken by Chisinau are destructive, runnning counter to Moldova's declared policy on settling the Transnistrian conflict and contradicting international agreements. I would like to once again draw attention to the fact that if the Moldovan delegation's initiative is implemented, it will fly in the face of the efforts to achieve a Transnistrian settlement that have been made under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. It will do serious, if not irreparable, damage to the General Assembly's reputation. In that connection, we call for a vote on Moldova's draft resolution A/72/L.58, and we urge all responsible delegations to vote against it.

The Acting President: Before proceeding to take a decision on draft resolution A/72/L.58, I wish to inform members that the President has been approached by several delegations concerning the majority required for the adoption of the draft resolution.

Is there any objection to applying a simple majority requirement to draft resolution A/72/L.58?

I see no objection. I will therefore take it that a simple majority of members present and voting is required for the adoption of draft resolution A/72/L.58.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/72/L.58, entitled "Complete and unconditional withdrawal of foreign military forces from the territory of the Republic of Moldova".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Nakano (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I would like to announce that since the submission of the draft resolution, and in addition to those delegations listed in document A/72/L.58, the following countries have also become sponsors of draft resolution A/72/L.58: the Czech Republic, Poland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/72/L.58. A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Belgium, Belize, Botswana, Bulgaria, Canada, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Maldives, Malta, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of

Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Vanuatu

Against:

Armenia, Belarus, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Burundi, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Myanmar, Nicaragua, Russian Federation, South Sudan, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Zimbabwe

Abstaining:

Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Benin, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kiribati, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Tuvalu, United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, Viet Nam

The draft resolution was adopted by 64 votes to 15, with 83 abstentions (resolution 72/282)

The Acting President: Before giving the floor for explanations of vote after the voting, I would like to remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Nguyen Cuong Duc (Viet Nam): My delegation abstained in the voting on resolution 72/282 for the following reasons. First, Viet Nam supports the fundamental principles set out in the resolution concerning the obligations of States Members of the United Nations to comply with international law and act in accordance with the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, particularly those in Article 2, which requires States

"to refrain ... from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State [and] to settle their international disputes by peaceful means".

Secondly, my delegation regrets that there were no consultations on the resolution among member States during the drafting process. Had there been consultations, its content would have been more comprehensive and balanced. Last but not least, Viet Nam strongly believes that the peaceful settlement of conflicts and disputes is key to sustainable peace and development. We therefore encourage the parties concerned to redouble their efforts to achieve constructive dialogue and find peaceful solutions to the benefit of all.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to express my regret at the outcome of the vote. The excessive politicization of this issue has occurred at the precise moment when real progress was being seen in the negotiations between Tiraspol and Chisinau. Last year, five bilateral agreements were signed aimed at addressing important issues of everyday life for the people on both sides of the Dniester. This year, the parties also reached an very useful agreement allowing non-commercial Transnistrian vehicles on international roads. Moldova's attempt in the General Assembly will clearly not be conducive to further progress in the negotiations.

It is no secret to anyone that Russia is a guarantor of peace and stability in the region. We want to point out once again that the leadership of Moldova is not united on resolution 72/282. The outcome of the vote demonstrates a clear divide among the States Members of the United Nations on the issue. An absolute majority chose to either abstain in the voting or not participate at all. If the aim was to split the General Assembly, it has been achieved.

It is disappointing that those voting in favour of the resolution included many members of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) who fail to understand that the Moldovan initiative undermines the efforts that have been undertaken within the OSCE framework. We see that as a classic example of double standards, as well as confirmation that the European Union is not about to acknowledge progress made through other international organizations, and that therefore Brussels and its client States subscribing to its foreign policy are not interested in a settlement but in

geopolitical considerations, and they are certainly not going to consider the views of the ordinary people in the region in their game. A highly democratic approach indeed.

We will soon see the seriousness of the blow that has been struck today against the process of bringing the opposing banks of the Dniester together. It is a pity that all the predictable negative consequences of today's vote will be associated with the General Assembly, a body intended to bring peoples closer together, not to divide them.

Mr. Dibaei (Islamic Republic of Iran): We earnestly hope that the issue under consideration by the General Assembly today will be resolved through peaceful means. However, we do not believe that the Assembly is the appropriate forum in which to consider issues of this nature. Because of that, we voted against resolution 72/282.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote after the voting. We will now hear statements following the adoption of resolution 72/282.

I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mrs. Cujo: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States.

The candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania, as well as Ukraine and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

The EU reaffirms its support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova within its internationally recognized borders. We want to highlight the importance of completing the processes that were begun based on the commitments agreed at the 1999 Istanbul Summit of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). We would like to recall that respect for the neutrality of the Republic of Moldova is a key element contributing to efforts to realizing the peaceful resolution of the Transnistrian conflict.

The EU welcomes the encouraging progress under the 5+2 process on the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict and remains committed to continuing to support it. The EU welcomes the Protocol of the Official Meeting of the Permanent Conference for Political Questions in the Framework of the Negotiating Process on the Transdniestrian Settlement held in Rome from 29 to 30 May under the Italian chairship of the OSCE and the engagement shown by all participants in the 5+2 format, and underlines the importance of maintaining a results-oriented process with a view to ensuring continued progress in negotiations and tangible benefits for the people.

Mr. Ulianovschi (Republic of Moldova): Resolution 72/282, which was just adopted, reinforces the resolve of the Republic of Moldova to continue its efforts to ensure the complete and unconditional withdrawal of Russian forces from its territory and our belief that our cause is just and legitimate. Today the General Assembly once again affirmed that international law and the Charter of the United Nations should prevail in relations among States, and we will stand firm in defending those principles.

Today is a great day for the people of the Republic of Moldova, whose trust has been restored in the international community's commitment to standing by our side and ensuring that justice can be done. I am proud and pleased to stand before the General Assembly, knowing that hundreds of thousands of my compatriots are watching us today at this truly historic moment for Moldova when, after more than 26 years, the General Assembly has declared that the Russian military presence is illegal and that it should be withdrawn. I cannot express enough how important it was not to dash the expectations of the people of Moldova and of all who believe in diplomacy and the international community. We know that the decision to support the resolution was not easy for many delegations. There have been many factors unrelated to the resolution's true scope that are designed to create confusion by using misleading arguments and information. That makes our achievement today even more valuable and important.

But we are not there yet. While this resolution is very important for us, it is just a small step in our consistent endeavours to achieve its ultimate goal. As our sole purpose is to build relations of trust with every country on the basis of mutual respect, understanding and, of course, international law, we are committed to a constructive dialogue with the concerned party in connection with the withdrawal of foreign military forces and armaments from the territory of the Republic of Moldova.

Finally, I wish to thank all those who supported this initiative, in particular the sponsors of this resolution, who believed in its merit and justness from the very beginning. That provided the great encouragement we need to persevere in our efforts. No one's support will be forgotten.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 35.

Agenda item 65 (*continued*)

Peacebuilding and sustaining peace

Draft resolution (A/72/L.61)

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Uzbekistan to introduce draft resolution A/72/L.61.

Mr. Ibragimov (Uzbekistan): Today, on behalf of the Permanent Missions of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and my own country, Uzbekistan, I have honour to introduce draft resolution A/72/L.61, entitled "Strengthening regional and international cooperation to ensure peace, stability and sustainable development in the Central Asian region".

Before proceeding, I would like to introduce a small technical revision to the thirteenth preambular paragraph, which now reflects the correct title of the conference it is referring to. The word "preventing" must be added, as now reflected in the revised thirteenth preambular paragraph, which is formulated as follows:

> "Taking into account the outcome of the high-level international conference on countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism, held in Dushanbe on 3 and 4 May 2018 ...".

Again, this is a technical update that sets forth the correct formulation of the event title.

I would now like to thank all States Members of the United Nations for their active and constructive participation and valuable input made during the informal consultations on A/72/L.61. I would also like to thank all delegations that sponsored the draft resolution.

During the general debate of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session in September, the President of Uzbekistan, Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev, proposed that the Assembly adopt a draft resolution on Central Asia (see A/72/PV.5). This initiative received broad support from Foreign Ministers of States of Central Asia, Afghanistan, high-ranking officials from the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, Europe and Asia, the United States of America, representatives of international organizations, including the United Nations, the European Union, the Organization for Islamic Cooperation, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, during the International High-level Conference on Security and Sustainable Development in Central Asia, held late November in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.

The main purpose of the proposed draft resolution is to garner international community support for Central Asian States' efforts aimed at forging closer regional collaboration based on the principles of good-neighbourliness and mutually beneficial partnership so that they can more effectively utilize their potential in trade, economic development, transport, communication, cultural and humanitarian affairs and other areas, in order to ensure peace, stability and sustainable development in the region.

The countries of Central Asia have great potential for cooperation and development. They share a common spiritual, cultural and historical heritage. They are brought together by a unity of faith, closeness of language and similarity in their peoples' mentality. The countries of the region also have a common transport and communication networks and economies that complement one another. We therefore firmly believe that Central Asia, located at the heart of the Eurasian continent, can once again play an important role as a major intersection in interregional transport and transit corridors connecting East with West.

In this context, the current policies of Central Asian countries on further strengthening bilateral relations among themselves open a strategic opportunity for establishing dialogue based on trust and building long-term constructive collaboration in the region. Over the past year and a half, thanks to the bold and very proactive policies put forth by President Mirziyoyev, which have been fully embraced by the leaders of all of Uzbekistan's neighbouring States, we are observing a fundamental shift in relations among the Central Asian countries that has led to the creation of an entirely new political environment in the region.

Contacts among Heads of State have increased dramatically, resulting in greater political trust among our countries, and we have begun to talk more about the benefits of cooperation rather than competition. We have also started sharing a common view of the need to find reasonable compromise to a number of sensitive regional issues. In particular, we have lately seen a tremendous change in the basis of collaboration among our countries, which has helped to resolve certain issues that have persisted for more than 26 years.

At the initiative of the President of Uzbekistan, we have established a mechanism of regular consultations among the Heads of State of the countries of our region. The first inaugural meeting of these consultations took place last March in Astana, where issues of further advancing and strengthening political, trade, economic and humanitarian cooperation in the region were thoroughly discussed. The Uzbek side proposed to host the second consultative meeting of the Heads of State next year in Tashkent.

The recent new dynamics have also been observed in the relations between the States of Central Asia with Afghanistan. This trend is very encouraging because the prospects of stable and sustainable development in Central Asia are inextricably linked to the achievement of lasting peace in this neighbouring country. In Central Asia, we believe that Afghanistan should be more actively integrated in regional economic processes, in particular in projects in the energy, transport, communications and other sectors that are being implemented by neighbouring countries. Such engagement by Afghanistan with Central Asian States would not only be an important contribution to international community efforts aimed at achieving a peaceful settlement of the current conflict in Afghanistan, but also bring tangible economic dividends to all countries of the region as a whole.

In conclusion, I would like to express our sincere hope that the proposed draft resolution will receive the overwhelming support of all the States Members of the United Nations, which we also encourage to become its sponsors. For their part, the Central Asian countries stand ready to closely cooperate with all Member States in the practical implementation of the draft resolution. Indeed, the successful adoption of draft resolution A/72/L.61 could be conducive to the maintenance of peace and stability in the region and to ensuring the region's sustainable development.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/72/L.61, as orally revised, entitled "Strengthening regional and international cooperation to ensure peace, stability and sustainable development in the Central Asian region". For the Assembly's information, the draft resolution has closed for e-sponsorship.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Nakano (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that since the submission of the draft resolution, and in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have also become sponsors of draft resolution A/72/L.61, as orally revised: Albania, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Burundi, Canada, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Djibouti, Ecuador, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lebanon, Morocco, Nigeria, Norway, Palau, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, Samoa, Singapore, Slovakia, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and Viet Nam.

Georgia, Kiribati, the Sudan, Iceland, Romania, Belgium, Cape Verde, Malta, Cambodia, Afghanistan, Malaysia and Luxembourg are also listed as sponsors of draft resolution A/72/L.61, as orally revised.

The Acting President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/72/L.61, as orally revised?

Draft resolution A/72/L.61, as orally revised, was adopted (resolution 72/283).

The Acting President: We will now hear statements after the adoption of the resolution.

Mr. Moldogaziev (Kyrgyzstan) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to take this opportunity to thank the delegations that supported resolution 72/283. I would also like to make a statement on the interpretation of paragraph 7 of the resolution.

We are not against the holding of a summit of the Heads of the participating States of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea. Nonetheless, we would like to point out that in 2016 Kyrgyzstan took the decision to cease its activity with regard to the Fund. Until the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea is

reformed, we do not see any prospect of resuming our participation in its work.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Dvořák (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its 28 member States.

The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the countries of the Stabilization Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union welcomes the adoption of resolution 72/283. In that regard, the European Union welcomes the positive developments under way in Central Asia and is a committed partner of countries of the region. Europe and the five countries of the region are now closer than ever before, and we are eager to engage further with the region where we have significant interests. We welcome all efforts that help Central Asia to develop as a peaceful, prosperous, resilient and more closely interconnected economic and political space. We shall release a new EU strategy on Central Asia early next year and aim to set a new level of ambition for our engagement in the region.

We welcome steps towards closer regional cooperation in Central Asia and are happy to support efforts for a collective approach to regional challenges, such as security, trade facilitation, border management, water and the environment, as well as sustainable connectivity. The European Union would like to take this opportunity to encourage Central Asian States to continue to create the regional conditions for peace and development in Afghanistan. It wishes to emphasize that the language in resolution 72/283 refers only to risks in Central Asia, given the specific circumstances in that region.

I would like to conclude by confirming that the EU and its member States will remain committed to working closely with the specialized agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations, as well as with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, to support sustainable development in Central Asia.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): I would like to thank all delegations that sponsored and supported resolution 72/283. It is important that our countries show solidarity and demonstrate that the integration process is under way in our region. All Central Asian countries are now on the path to sustainable development and closer cooperation. A Central Asia that is stable and prosperous is beneficial to all countries and organizations. Once again, the delegation of Kazakhstan would like to thank all countries that supported the resolution.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 65.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.